

Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman Information Publication Scheme Agency Plan

Introduction

The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman has prepared this Information Publication Scheme (IPS) agency plan in accordance with section 8(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (the FOI Act). The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman exists to safeguard the community in its dealings with government agencies, and to ensure that administrative action taken by Australian Government agencies is fair and accountable.

Purpose

This plan explains how the Office administers the IPS.

Objectives

The Office will publish material on the Office's IPS entry in accordance with the principles outlined below.

1. IPS information will be published on the Office's IPS entry, unless it has been assessed as exempt in accordance with the FOI Act.
2. Information will be assessed for publication on the IPS with a pro-disclosure culture, consistent with the FOI Act.
3. IPS information will be accurate, up to date, and complete.
4. IPS information will be easily accessible and published in an accessible format enabling the public to use the information.
5. IPS publication requirements will be considered when documents are created by the Office.

Establishing and administering the agency's IPS entry

Section 10A of the FOI Act provides that a function or power given to an agency under Part II of the Act can be performed or exercised by the principal officer of the agency or by an agency officer in accordance with arrangements approved by the principal officer.

The Ombudsman has authorised the positions of Deputy Ombudsman, Senior Assistant Ombudsman (SAO) and Chief Operating Officer to exercise all functions and powers under Part II of the Act.

The functions and powers to be exercised under Part II include:

- preparation of an agency plan under s 8(1)
- publication of information required to be published by the agency under s 8(2), including deciding whether information is exempt from publication under s 8(2)(g)
- publication of other information by the agency under s 8(4)
- ensuring that information published by the agency is accurate, up-to-date and complete as required by s 8B
- ensuring that information published by the agency is published on a website in accordance with ss 8D(2),(3)
- deciding whether the agency will impose a charge for accessing information published by the agency (s 8D(4)), and publishing details of any charges the agency may impose (s 8D(5))
- arranging for regular review (at least once every 5 years) of the agency's IPS (s 9)
- if the need arises, taking appropriate action under s 10 to ensure that a person is not subjected to any prejudice as a result of not having access to operational information that was not published as required by s 8(2)(j).

Delegates

As authorised under the FOI Act SAOs are responsible for undertaking the functions and powers under the Part II of the Act. That includes ensuring the teams they supervise comply with the IPS publication requirements by identifying and assessing documents, recording decisions on publication and approving publication.

SAOs will be required to conduct a review annually for teams within their Branches to ensure all IPS information has been identified, assessed, decisions recorded and documents published (where determined appropriate).

Individual teams / IPS Coordinators

Each team within the Office is required to identify and assess IPS information for publication and bring that to the attention of their respective SAOs. Each team should identify an IPS Coordinator for identification and assessment of IPS information.

In assessing IPS information the IPS Coordinator must liaise with the Legal team to ensure exempt material is appropriately managed.

Decisions, and reasons, to publish in full, part or not to publish IPS information must be recorded and added to an IPS Decision Register.

Structure of the IPS

- a) The Office publishes IPS information to the general public on the Commonwealth Ombudsman website
- b) The Office's IPS Entry has a dedicated page on the Commonwealth Ombudsman website
- c) The information is published under headings consistent with the relevant sections of the FOI Act and the recommendations of the Information Commissioner
- d) The IPS Entry is notified on the Commonwealth Ombudsman homepage with the IPS Icon to provide a direct link to relevant information
- e) The Commonwealth Ombudsman website includes a general search function to assist in locating the IPS Entry and documents published under the IPS
- f) The Office's IPS Entry is fully conformant to WCAG 2.0

Information required to be published under the IPS

In accordance with s. 8(2) of the FOI Act the Office will publish:

- the Office's IPS Plan
- the Office's structure and organisation details
- the Office's functions, including associated decision-making powers and other powers affecting members of the public
- details of Office statutory appointments
- information in annual reports, prepared by the Office and laid before parliament
- arrangements the public may use to comment on Office policy proposals
- information which the Office routinely gives access to, either in response to FOI requests, or in response to requests from parliament
- contact details for an officer responsible for information requests under the FOI Act
- operational information, which is information held by the Office to assist the Office to perform or exercise Office functions or powers in making decisions or recommendations affecting members of the public, such as, guidelines.

Helping people, improving government

The Office will also consider publishing optional information, under s 8(4) of the FOI Act.

The Office proposes to publish documents as they are identified and assessed for publication.

IPS compliance review.

The Office proposes to review this plan at the end of each Financial Year, along with its IPS entry and compliance.

The Office will maintain an IPS Decision Register and save all decisions on publication to measure its performance in complying with IPS requirements.

Agency plan: 21 May 2025